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## FOREIGN RELATIONS

## Millions for Tribute?

At Miami's International Airport, a stocky, white-haired man wearily faced newsmen. New York Lawyer James B. Donovan was just back from Havana, but he could offer only the haziest account of his effort to ransom 1,113 Cuban prisoners captured by Castro after the collapse of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. "The negotiations haven't broken down," said Donovan. "There are simply some points that must be resolved." He had made "concrete offers" to Castro, and "now we must await resolutions"—meaning wait for Castro's next move.

What had he offered Castro? Drugs, medicines and baby foods, said Donovan. "Not one dollar in cash is involved." What was the total dollar value of the package? Donovan declined to say. How much of the ransom was being put up by the U.S. Government? Said Donovan: "The U.S. Government has absolutely no part in these negotiations."

**A Grim Occasion.** It was a grim occasion for Negotiator Donovan. His bursitis was paining him, and he was terribly tired. When he stood up at the end of the press conference, he wobbled so alarmingly that policemen hurried to his aid. He had spent eight nerve-grating days waiting around in Havana. Castro had deigned to see him only twice, behaving with the assurance of a blackmailer in a society with no law against blackmail.

It was also a grim occasion for the U.S., which somehow found itself offering ransom to the uncouth Communist dictator



NEGOTIATOR DONOVAN  
A grotesquely awkward posture.

of an impoverished island less than 100 miles from Florida. That was a grotesquely awkward posture for a nation that cherishes "Millions for defense, but not a cent for tribute" as one of its proud historical utterances.\* The ransom negotiations were all the more embarrassing at a time when the U.S. was pressing other nations to halt shipments to Cuba.

Donovan's mission was made all the more unseemly by other events that took place last week. At the U.N., Cuba's President Osvaldo Dorticos spied forth a ranting attack, accusing the U.S. of "aggressive hysteria" and "hunger for domination." In Havana, Castro made a chest-thumping speech gibing at U.S. fears that an attack on Cuba will lead to nuclear war with Russia. And in the U.S. Congress, New York's Republican Senator Kenneth Keating said that U.S. intelligence had detected six additional missile sites under construction in Cuba. The Administration, charged Keating, was keeping the U.S. public "in the dark" about the Russian buildup in Cuba.

**"Amiable Fiction."** Against this background, Donovan's mission to Havana would have seemed dubious even if it had been an open, honest attempt by the

\* It was voiced in 1798 by Robert Goodloe Harper, U.S. Congressman from South Carolina, in reference to French demands that the U.S. pay a sort of indemnity for signing an amicable treaty with France's enemy, Britain.

U.S. Government to ransom the Bay of Pigs prisoners. But it was neither open nor honest. The Administration put up a strained pretense that Donovan was negotiating as a private citizen on behalf of an organization called the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners of War. Assistant Secretary of State Edwin M. Martin flatly declared that Donovan "has no connection with the Administration." The Justice Department admitted that Donovan had conferred with Attorney General Kennedy several times, but insisted that the visits were merely "courtesy calls."

This insistence drew some sharp journalistic fire. The New York Times's James Reston charged that the Administration merely "added to the confusion about Cuba" by disclaiming any connection with Donovan's mission. Liberal Washington Columnist William V. Shannon wrote that the "amiable fiction" about the prisoner negotiations is wrong on two counts: 1) the President of the U.S. "ought not to be a party to practicing a deception on the people and the Congress," and 2) "this kind of secret will not keep, and its disclosure is always embarrassing."

**Project X.** Once before, President Kennedy had tried to make an Administration-sponsored ransom attempt look like a private undertaking. Shortly after



BURRUS JENKINS JR.—HEARST HEADLINE SERVICE  
"Now, What Am I Bid?"



the Bay of Pigs disaster, Castro offered to buy tractors for the United States. At the behind-the-scenes urging of the President, a group of prominent U.S. citizens formed a committee to raise money to buy tractors for Castro. The deal collapsed when Castro demanded heavy, tank-tread tractors costing several times as much as the wheeled farm tractors the committee had planned to deliver to him.

The outcome was a great relief to the many Americans who found the deal repugnant. But President Kennedy was dis-

appointed. The prisoners weighed on his mind. He had sponsored the Bay of Pigs invasion under his sponsorship, and his decision not to support them with U.S. air cover doomed whatever prospects for success they might have had. So the President undertook a second ransom effort, with less fanfare, working through the Cuban Families Committee—"Project X," the White House called it.

What made the Administration's involvement so obvious was the glaring disparity between the size of Castro's de-

mands and the resources of the Families Committee. Castro's last publicly announced price tag on the prisoners' freedom was \$62 million, which works out to more than \$50,000 per prisoner. He is now demanding drugs and other goods worth a comparable amount at Cuban prices. The Kennedy Administration has been pressuring U.S. drug manufacturers to supply wares for the ransom package at nonprofit prices, but even so the total cost will run to millions of dollars. The Families Committee obviously can supply only a picayune fraction of the money. The unavoidable conclusion is that much or most of the ransom money is going to come from the U.S. taxpayers by the way of the President's contingency fund or some other lightly audited channel.

Once that conclusion sank in on Capitol Hill, members of Congress erupted with cries of anger and protest. On the floor of the Senate, Mississippi Democrat John Stennis and Delaware Republican John J. Williams declared themselves opposed to the use of any federal funds to meet Castro's demands. Four Congressmen sent the President telegrams demanding to know where the money was going to come from. In a floor speech, Florida's Republican Congressman William C. Cramer said that "this whole deal smells."

**Conflict of Roles.** An extra complication was the fact that Negotiator Donovan is the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senator from New York against Republican Incumbent Jacob Javits. He therefore has a big, personal political stake in the outcome. Even the pro-Kennedy Washington Post voiced editorial misgivings about Donovan's "conflict of roles." Said the Post: "Suppose the Cubans are freed before the election. The suspicion will exist, fairly or not, that the United States has paid a bribe to the Castro regime at least in part to help publicize a candidate for office."

When Donovan arrived in Miami last week, gathered to meet him were many of the relatives and friends of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. They had been hoping against hope for months. Now, some of the prisoners' wives wore yellow dresses—in symbolic reply to the yellow prison shirts that Castro had forced their husbands to wear in an attempt to brand them as cowards. When Donovan came back empty-handed, the Cubans drifted slowly away.

But many other Cuban exiles, particularly those who had no close kinfolds among the prisoners, were bitterly opposed to the ransom negotiations. Said an exile leader in Puerto Rico: "Cubans are demoralized because they fear that the U.S. Government is behind the ransom deal. It means that the U.S. does not plan to do anything to rescue these prisoners except pay money. It means that the U.S. will rescue a few Cubans, but not the whole Cuban people." Warned a Cuban exile living in Washington: "If the U.S. pays the ransom, the people of Cuba and all the rest of Latin America will recognize that your Government is willing to accept Communism in Cuba. This is a tragedy."

## KENNEDY'S MAN IN HAVANA

### CPYRGHT Experience in Dark Corners

WHEN James Britt Donovan finished college, he asked his father to buy him a newspaper. That request was typical of Donovan's positive-thinking approach to life. At New York's Fordham University, where his classmates voted him "best all-round man," he had prepared for a career in journalism, and it seemed sensible to start out as owner-editor-publisher of his own newspaper rather than as a cub reporter on somebody else's. His father, a high-fee New York surgeon, agreed to buy his son a newspaper, but he laid down a condition: James would have to get a law degree first.

At Harvard Law School, Donovan changed his mind about his future. And as a lawyer he has prospered splendidly. He can afford the rich man's hobby of collecting rare books and manuscripts. He can also afford to leave his practice now and then for spells of public service as an operator in international dark corners—a specialty that traces back to his wartime service as legal counsel to "Wild Bill" Donovan (no kin), head of the cloak-and-dagger Office of Strategic Services. After the war, Donovan served on the U.S. legal staff at the war-crime trials in Nurnberg, later helped draft the legislation setting up the Central Intelligence Agency.

Donovan came to public attention in 1957 as the defense lawyer for Colonel Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, who in the guise of a struggling artist had masterminded a Russian spy ring from a studio in Brooklyn. Donovan did not seek the task—it was assigned to him by the court on the recommendation of a Bar Association committee. But once he took it on, he defended Abel with skill and dedication. He carried the defense to the Supreme Court, succeeded in getting Abel a fairly gentle sentence of 30 years' imprisonment. "In my time on this court," said Chief Justice Earl Warren, "no man has undertaken a more arduous and self-sacrificing task." In gratitude, Abel presented Donovan with one of his paintings. Donovan also received a

\$10,000 fee from somebody behind the Iron Curtain purporting to be Abel's wife. He donated the \$10,000 to Fordham, Harvard and Columbia.

Donovan paid an uncomfortable price for defending Abel. Abusive calls poured in upon him, and he had his phone disconnected. His four children were jeered at by their schoolmates. His own friends teased him about being pro-Red. "You get rather tired of it," he said. "At a recent dinner, it was good for 20 minutes of needling for me to ask the waiter to bring Russian dressing for my shrimp."

In arguing against the death penalty in the Abel case, Donovan made the point that some time in the future "an American of equivalent rank" might be taken prisoner by the Communists, and it might be useful to the U.S. to work out an "exchange of prisoners." That plea proved to be prophetic: in Berlin early this year, the Kennedy Administration released Abel to the Russians in exchange for captured U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers (TIME, Feb. 16). Negotiator of the deal: James B. Donovan. As in the current negotiations with Fidel Castro, Donovan played a murky ambiguous role. He was supposedly acting as an attorney for Abel's putative wife. But in effect he was serving as a Kennedy Administration agent.

In the apparent belief that these negotiations with Communists have appeal to voters, the Kennedy Administration last month backed Donovan, 46, as the Democratic choice to run for the U.S. Senate against Republican Incumbent Jacob Javits. Only a man as determinedly hopeful as Donovan would be willing to take on that sacrificial assignment. He said he was going to wage a "positive" campaign to make the voters of New York State "realize that their interests would be better served in the Senate by a Democrat working with President Kennedy." That is just about the only campaign statement Donovan has made so far. Almost ever since, he has been going to or from Havana.